



Mr Chancellor:

Anne Martin-Matthews is a pioneer in the social science of ageing. As society ages, so ageing becomes fashionable. Baby-boomers, obsessed with youth when young themselves, are now thinking more about later years, as the boom threatens to bust the generations spawned since. 60 is the new 40 –some of us will be 39 forever.

But Professor Martin-Matthews started to think about social issues around ageing a long time ago - when most of her generation of sociologists were researching gender, sexuality, race or class. These dimensions are relevant to older people too, but age was not on most agendas then. Anne's interests were stimulated by her PhD supervisor, Victor Marshall, who offered the very first course in the sociology of ageing just as Anne started her own PhD in the early 70s.

Professor Martin-Matthews' interests have always revolved around the theme of 'family' and the variety of extended, contracted, amended and protracted roles that adults play in families – as husbands and wives, carers and recipients of care. Indeed her interest has been not so much in roles, as in their transitions -particularly in later life –from employee to pensioner, from wife to widow. Her interest in these issues was kindled in part by experiences as a child observing her grandfather in Newfoundland, and then as a lodger, and later partial carer for, an elderly widowed woman who had already coped with the loss of her own child. Professor Matthews has also researched home carers and the kind of daily transition faced by those with

dual responsibilities – double whammies perhaps –the professional carer who returns home from work each night to assume the role as carer of their own relatives.

Anne was born and educated in Newfoundland where her first degree was in Sociology and Anthropology. She used these disciplines and her personal experience of relocation in her Masters thesis at McMaster in Ontario, about the transitions involved in relocating Newfoundlanders in Hamilton. Relocation remained the nominal focus of her PhD in Sociology there too, largely because the funders of it - who were in the home finance business - insisted that it should. But she was focussing her interests on ageing even then. From McMaster, which later honoured her as Distinguished Alumnus in 1997, she gained her first lectureship in the department of Family Studies at Guelph. She remained there for 20 years.

That's when she began explicitly to research role transitions at key times in life – including later stages such as retirement but also earlier transitions such as that to the state of 'childlessness' by infertile women, or those voluntarily childless. Her dynamism and drive were apparent even before she gained tenure. In the early 1980s the Social Science Research Council in Canada offered a competition to fund infrastructure for the development of ageing research in the social sciences. Anne persuaded her Dean that they should put in a bid. This was funded – unusually perhaps as Guelph was not, at that time, a major research university.

So, Anne became the founding director of Guelph's Gerontology Research Centre in 1983, and remained in this role for three terms, until 1995. At Guelph too she was funded as one of the co-investigators in the Canadian Ageing Research Network – directed by her former mentor Victor Marshall – drawing funding from three major funding agencies in Canada. Guelph recognised her outstanding research contributions with a Macdonald Institute Centenary Award in 2003.

Her ability to work across disciplines and funding agencies has become crystallised in her current role, assumed after she joined the University of British Columbia in 1998. Anne now directs the Canadian National Institute of Ageing, one of 13 institutes of the Canadian Institute of Health Research, which is the organisation funding medical research in Canada. She is the only institute director who is a social scientist. The Institute is not a research centre but a research facilitator. Its job is to

set the research agenda for the nation and then allocate funding to particular areas of strategic priority – for example, 23 million Canadian dollars on mobility in ageing, and 32 million on cognitive impairments. The personal achievement that she herself singles out in this role is working over several years to help shape and secure funding for the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Ageing. This study will follow some 50,000 Canadian women and men who start out from 45 to 85 years old. These volunteers will be followed up at three-year intervals for up to 20 years or more. A fair few transitions can be studied from that!

One key peer review committee noted that the Canadian Longitudinal Study is, “a significant research endeavour of a magnitude that ...has not been seen before in population aging, a wonderful resource for decades to come in terms of factors which influence health in seniors..., [and]...one of a kind even by international standards”.... Newcastle University’s Institute of Ageing and Health enjoys strong links with Anne’s Institute and anticipates linkage with this new longitudinal study too. This is one example of the international as well as interdisciplinary links forged by Professor Martin-Matthews, with Japan and China as well as the UK. Of course this involves a fair bit of travel. Her sociologist husband, whose academic work also takes him away often, says that one month last year their paths crossed just three times – in airports.

Engagement with policy makers and users of research is high on Anne’s agenda too – and she does this extraordinarily widely and successfully – with Canadian ministers one day, explaining problems of ill health in the elderly, and with a self-help group of seniors the next. Her Institute advisory group includes senior citizens, not just scientists. And she organises Cafés Scientifique in several regions, and in both French and English, each year.

On top of all this she keeps her own research going, publishing frequently and collaborating widely with other scholars, including husband Ralph. On Ralph’s 65th birthday she commented that he had finally reached the age she was interested in. He said that after 37 years of marriage he was delighted that he could still interest her at all.

Chancellor, in recognition of Professor Anne Martin-Matthews contributions to our understanding of the nature and impact of the changing age of our society, I ask that you bestow upon her the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.